DETROIT, MICH.
FREE PRESS
OCT 3 1 1974
M - 530,264
S - 578,254

Schmidt, William
CIA-Op-Marchetti, Victor
Soc-Hist-The Rope Dancer

BOOKS & MORE BOOKS

Spying on the Spies--For Agents' Novel of CIA in LBJ Years

THE ROPE-DANCER, by Victor Mrchetti (Grossett & Dunlap, $6.95).

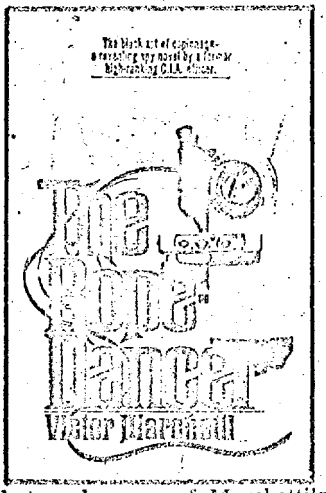
Paul Franklin is the hero of a book called "The Rope Dancer." He is a husband, father and rising young career officer in an American intelligence agency.

He is also a Soviet spy.

Victor Marchetti is the author of "The Rope Dancer." He is a husband, father and, until two years ago, was a rising young career officer in an American intelligence agency. More specifically, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

ACCORDING to the press information that came along with the book, Marchetti got out of the CIA for just about the same reasons that Paul Franklin finally decided to become a Soviet spy.

He was driven into something else because, Marchetti says, he felt "the agency had outgrown itself. The clandestine attitude, the amorality of it all, the cold war mentality — these things made me feel the agency was really out of step with the times."



So Marchetti became an author.

And Franklin, cut by Marchetti out of the same mold he says characterizes many of the agency's personnel, goes a different route. He decides he will spy for the Soviets in return for money. And when he gets enough, Franklin will quit the agency and the Soviets, and go off with his family to live as his own man.

It is a simple, and perhaps naive, beginning of a plot that finally scores high points not only in suspense and intrigue, but — because of Marchetti's real life models — allows the reader a chance to spy himself on the men and bureaucracy at the very core of America's most mysterious, clandestine intelligence organization.

Marchetti makes little effort to disguise most of his subject matter. Much of the book is a thinly veiled view of the internal struggles over Vietnam and Russian strategic advances as Marchetti saw them within the CIA, the Pentagon and White House under President Johnson.

THE INSIGHTS that Marchetti provides into the CIA do not give the dirty details of secret plots, or explain where the agency plans to overthrow a government next.

But, in a broader sense, Marchetti portrays a supersecret spy agency that is not too different from a lot of less vaunted government offices and, for that matter, businesses.

For all its intrigue, the CIA-like agency that appears in the pages of Marchetti's book is riddled with bureaucracy and internal dissension; hamstrung by politics and, by and large, run by a lot of personally ambitious persons who happen to have particularly low thresholds when it comes to secrecy and paranoia. That description could fit a downtown brokerage firm, a suburban ad office and even a big city daily newspaper. Except that they aren't trying to overthrow foreign governments.

That doesn't mean that Marchetti's book is a plodding study of ineptness and red tape or that it lacks the usual roster of devious agents and double agents. There is plenty of evil, suspense and good old-fashioned spy novel duplicity to satisfy the most ardent James Bond fan.

It's not the first time that an author has told us that secret agents and intelligence organizations are the products of devious, amoral and often stupid governments. But it's nice to know that in a lot of ways, the inner workings of such mysterious and clandestine operations aren't too different than your own office.

It makes the whole cold war seem a bit more human.

—*WILLIAM SCHMIDT, Free Press Staff Writer*